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Chapter 1

The light slanted in through the ceiling, the golden color of leaf-fall pine needles shining onto Blackkit's paws. She turned her head to look at her sister, Birdkit. The bigger kit lay sleeping, the dappled sunlight dancing across her gray tabby fur. Blackkit stood up and stretched, her tiny needle-like claws sliding out of their sheath. *I want to go outside*, she thought, *but what if a warrior catches me?* She poked her nose out the small nursery entrance, sniffing the leaf-fall air. *Wait a second...I can outrun a warrior!* Blackkit slithered out of the den, pretending to be a skilled warrior. She looked around the camp, scattered pine needles blew loosely across the empty area. The small kit could hear the sound of deep breathing coming from the apprentice den, which was closest to the nursery. *The older cats are still asleep!*

Suddenly, Blackkit felt teeth clamp down on her scruff, and she let out a loud squeal. *Oh no! A badger's got me!* She kicked and squirmed and tried to claw the creature, when suddenly, it dropped her and...laughed?

"Woah, woah, little one!" Blackkit turned around and saw that the 'badger' had actually been Eagleshade, the clan deputy. He looked down at her with amber eyes gleaming. "What are you doing outside the nursery?" Blackkit's eyes darted around the camp to try and find a suitable coverup. "I, uh...was looking for..." Eagleshade laughed unexpectedly. "Well, let's make this our little secret." He winked. "Okay, better get back to bed before your mother wakes up." Blackkit raised her tail up high. "Thank you!" Then she darted inside the nursery as quietly as she could.

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"Wow! Look at that, Blackkit!" Birdkit had her head out the nursery entrance, practically jumping out of her paws. "What? What?" Blackkit shoved her sister to the side and looked out into the camp.
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The clan leader, Adderstar, was calling a clan meeting, and cats were approaching the Tall Pine where she sat. "Rainpaw and Graypaw are becoming warriors!" Birdkit mewed excitedly. Blackkit's blue eyes grew wide. "Warriors!" She exclaimed breathlessly. She strained her ears to hear every bit of what Adderstar was saying.

"I, Adderstar, leader of Shadowclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these two apprentices. They both have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn. Rainpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Rainpaw looked nervous, but her voice was steady, "I do."

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Rainpaw, from this moment you will be known as Rainfall. Starclan honors your cleverness and caring personality, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Shadowclan."

Adderstar rested his muzzle on the new warrior's head, and Rainfall licked his shoulder.

"And Graypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

Graypaw sat up straighter. "I do."

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Graypaw, from this moment you will be known as Grayfoot. Starclan honors your braveness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Shadowclan."

Adderstar rested his muzzle on the gray cat's head, and he licked his shoulder in turn.

Then the entire clan breaks out into a chorus. "Rainfall, Grayfoot! Rainfall, Grayfoot! Rainfall, Grayfoot!"

I can't wait until my warrior ceremony, Blackkit thought, pulling her head back inside the darkening nursery.

Chapter 2

"Birdpaw! Let's go practice some hunting moves!" Blackpaw mewed excitedly.

"Blackpaw, how many times do I have to tell you? I'm a medicine cat apprentice! I don't do hunting moves." Birdpaw sternly meowed, giving her sister a side-look with her green eyes.

Blackpaw flicked her tail angrily, laying her ears back on her head. "You're no fun at all! And you already sound like Toadfoot with that attitude."

Birdpaw's eyes narrowed in annoyance, then they opened up again and sat down with a sigh. "Please don't make this hard for me! I'm already having problems keeping up with Toadfoot! He says that whitecough is already spreading through the camp, but I don't even have all the herbs memorized yet!"

Blackpaw's anger faded away, replaced with sympathy for her sister. She rested her tail on Birdpaw's shoulder to comfort her. "I'm sorry. It's just hard now because I've always imagined us becoming warriors together." She diverted her blue eyes away from her sister's green ones.

"That's alright. But I better get going before Toadfoot-"

"Birdpaw! Where are those poppyseeds I asked for?" A tom called from across the brightening camp.

"Uh oh. Better run, you know how he gets!" Birdpaw raced off to the narrow opening in the brambles in the medicine den.

Blackpaw sighed. *Now who am I going to train with?* She wondered.

"Hey Blackpaw! Wanna join our hunting patrol?"

Blackpaw turned around to see the most annoying member of

Shadowclan standing with a wide grin on his face. "Nightpaw, I don't think it's your job to pick who comes on patrols!" She growled.

"She's right, Nightpaw." Eagleshade padded up to the two apprentices. "But, I do think this hunting patrol could use some extra paws. How about coming with us, Blackpaw?" His tabby fur gleamed in the sunlight, his long shadow making him seem huge.

Blackpaw rolled her eyes. She hated it when the older cats treated her like a kit! "Sure." She mumbled grumpily.

Eagleshade didn't seem to notice Blackpaw's attitude, and continued to round up the patrol, choosing Stormpelt and Grayfoot to finish it off.

Nightpaw stuck to Blackpaw's side like a stubborn bramble, through the whole patrol.

Stormpelt looked back and glared at Blackpaw and her living shadow. "Keep up! Leaf-bare is coming soon, and we can't afford to lose any fresh-kill." He snarled.

Nightpaw dipped his head. "Sorry, Stormpelt." Then he sped up, still beside Blackpaw, but keeping up with the older cats.

Suddenly, Eagleshade froze, and every cat had to stop in it's tracks to keep from running into him. "Do you hear that?" He whispered to Stormpelt.

Stormpelt nodded. "Smells like Thunderclan." He growled.

Nightpaw's eyes grew wide. "Oh no! I don't want to get attacked! I haven't had enough training!" He yowled loudly.

Blackpaw practically shoved her tail into the pesky cat's mouth trying to quiet him down, but the Thunderclan voices had stopped, and the forest grew eerily quiet.

The birds stopped chirping, and the sounds of prey stopped mid-rustle. The wind even died down, the usual leaf-fall air stopped swishing the pines overhead.

Blackpaw could hear Eagleshade and Stormpelt taking deep breaths, their jaws parted. She copied them, and the scents flew freely onto her tongue. The Thunderclan scent was very obvious, even though Blackpaw had only been an apprentice for a moon, she could tell which direction it was coming from and how close. She wondered what Thunderclan was doing so far inside the Shadowclan borders.

Nightpaw shivered, his black pelt rubbing Blackpaw's.

Eagleshade crouched down, stalking through the brush silent as a mouse. He peeked around a pine and slowly returned to the patrol. He then nodded in the direction of the Thunderclan intruders.

Blackpaw understood. Even though this was a hunting patrol, she braced herself for a border skirmish.

The Shadowclan deputy stood up straight, and called out to the tresspassers. "Hey! Thunderclan! What do you think you're doing?"

The hunting patrol walked together into sight of the Thunderclan cats. By the sight of it, they weren't there for a fight. There were only three cats, and one was scrawny like a rougue.

Suddenly, Eagleshade relaxed, along with Stormpelt and Grayfoot.

"Sorry, Heathersong, I didn't realize this was a medicine cat thing." Eagleshade apologized to the scrawny black and white cat.

Heathersong chuckled. "That's alright Eagleshade. But if you wouldn't mind escorting us to your camp, I'd rather not run into any more hostile hunting patrols!"

Eagleshade nodded. "Of course," Then, turning to Stormpelt, "can you finish this patrol for me? Like you said, we can't afford to waste our time losing prey."

Stormpelt looked honored, even though Blackpaw thought being leader of a hunting patrol wasn't exactly a huge deal. "Yes, we will bring back loads of fresh-kill!" He meowed proudly.

Heathersong dipped her head to the Shadowclan deputy and they headed for the camp, along with the escorts Heathersong had

brought with her.

"Wow, I can't believe he put you in charge! You must be very important!" Nightpaw gaped at the gray warrior with awe.

Stormpelt puffed out his chest. "Of course I am! Why else would he put me in charge rather than Grayfoot?"

Because you're one moon older than him, Blackpaw wanted to say. But she kept her mouth shut.

"We should split up," Grayfoot meowed, "you know, to cover more ground. If that's okay with you, Stormpelt."

"Great idea! We'll each take an apprentice with us; we wouldn't want them running off!" Stormpelt laughed.

Grayfoot agreed jokingly. "You never know what those little rascals might get into!"

Both warriors laughed loudly, seeming to forget about the hunting patrol.

Blackpaw cleared her throat, annoyed at the older cat's irresponsibility. If Eagleshade would've put her in charge, they would already be hunting by now.

Stormpelt calmed down at the sudden inturruption from Blackpaw. "Okay, okay. Sorry about that." He meowed to her. "Just having some fun."

"There's no time for fun, we need to get hunting if we are going to catch anything!" Blackpaw blurted accidentally. *Oh no*, she thought, *what if he kicks me out of the patrol?*

Stormpelt stared at her for a moment, then smiled again. "I like you, kid. Come on, you're on my team. Whoever gets the most prey wins!"

All four cats darted off; Grayfoot and Nightpaw going the opposite direction of Stormpelt and Blackpaw.

They slowed down, listening for sounds of soon-to-be-fresh-kill.

Blackpaw picked up the rustling of what she guessed to be a mouse. The mice were plentiful closer to the Thunderclan border, and that's just where they'd chosen to hunt.

She ducked down into the hunter's crouch, concentrating on a pile of oak leaves about a fox-length in front of her. She stalked forward, silently. Suddenly, a stick cracked under her paw, and the mouse darted out from under the leaves.

Stormpelt caught it and killed it with a quick bite to the neck. Then set it down on the cold ground.

"Good job! I didn't even smell that mouse!" He praised.

Blackpaw felt her fur get hot with embarrassment. "No, I should've been paying attention to where I put my paws. Then I might've caught it myself!" She flicked her tail.

"Hey, that's what I'm here for." Stormpelt meowed, covering up their mouse to come retrieve it later. "We're partners, remember?"

Blackpaw felt a little better after hearing that. "Yeah," She meowed with a smile. "Now let's win this thing!"

Chapter 3

When the four cats met back up near the Thunderclan border, it was clear which team had won.

"Yes! We won!" Stormpelt yowled.

Blackpaw and Stormpelt had caught a lot more than Nightpaw and Grayfoot. A huge pile of mice was scattered at their paws.

"Dang it! That's not fair, Blackpaw! You got an older warrior on your team!" Nightpaw whined, his green eyes lowered.

"Aw, come on, Nightpaw! Don't be a sore loser! You caught almost half of our prey." Grayfoot meowed reassuringly to the sulking apprentice. But he continued to pout.

"Well, we better get all this prey back to the camp." Stormpelt picked up as much as he could in his jaws.

"Just wait until the rest of our clanmates see this!" Blackpaw said excitedly.

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As soon as Blackpaw dropped of her load of fresh-kill, her stomach grumbled. She grabbed a fat thrush and settled down to eat alone.

But soon, a shadow settled over her thrush.

"Mind if I sit with you? My sister is on a border patrol." Stormpelt's voice asked.

At first, Blackpaw was hesitant. Wasn't this the same annoying cat that she started the hunting patrol with? But then again, wasn't he the same cat that she'd had fun playing games with?

"Yeah, sure. You can sit with me." Blackpaw was as surprised as
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anyone to hear herself say that. Well, at least he's better than Nightpaw, she thought.

As he sat down, Stormpelt chuckled. "You know, I wasn't sure if you would actually say yes," He meowed, "you seemed pretty mad at Grayfoot and I when we were joking around."

Blackpaw shuffled her paws, finished with her thrush but not this conversation. Why was he asking her about this? Did I seem mad at them? She wondered.

"Yeah, well, I guess I was a little mad." She admitted, her eyes narrowed in mock anger. "You guys were supposed to be hunting!" She meowed in a voice like Adderstar's.

Stormpelt let out a *mrrrow* of amusement. "That's pretty good!" He laughed again, "But really, sometimes us warriors are just too serious! If we don't have a little fun every once and a while, what makes us cats anymore?" He twitched his ears at Adderstar. "Like him," Stormpelt watched the leader walk to the medicine den. "He's on his last life and he's still to serious for his own good!"

As the gray warrior talked, Blackpaw began to understand what he meant. *Maybe the clan cats* are *too serious.*

"Yeah! I get it now!" She meowed excitedly. "Like the warrior code! Some things are just too formal. Feeding the elders first? What's the point of that? They don't do anything for us! The rule should be to feed the strong warriors first so they stay strong, instead of wasting fresh-kill on the dead-weight cats."

Stormpelt lit up. "Finally! Someone understands me! I've told my sister about this before but she just doesn't understand...She thinks I'm crazy!" He narrowed his blue eyes and seemed to get far away.

Blackpaw watched the warrior. She suddenly felt this horrible urge rise up in her. She wanted the power of a warrior. No, she wanted the power of the deputy. No, the *leader.* The feeling rose up in her small chest and threatened to burst out. Blackpaw wasn't aware that all her thoughts could be read in her eyes. At least by someone who understands the thoughts.

"Blackpaw?"

"Yeah?" She meowed through gritted teeth.

"We need to be in charge. They don't deserve that power. *We do.* I don't care what we have to do to get there."

"I'm with you, one hundred percent."

"Well...we need to get rid of the cats in charge now."

"You mean..?"

"Yes."

"*We are going to kill Adderstar."*

Chapter 4

The night air was breezy, but just right. It flowed through fur like water in a greenleaf storm. The toads croaking filled the clear night. All the fireflies seemed to be flying around one black cat sitting alone in a clearing. Pine needles scattered the ground all around her, and the moon made her blue eyes shine. Another cat stood near, watching the beautiful she-cat. What he wouldn't give to have her all his own. But another tom has already stolen her heart, and he won't give it up easily.

Then he was there, next to her. The night made his pelt black, and they seemed at one. But as lovely as they both were together, their watcher knew the she-cat belonged with him. He loved everything about her, but she wouldn't talk to him.

He loved her so much he didn't even care that she was plotting *murder*.

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"Blackpaw! Wake up! Gorsetail wants you for a border patrol!"

Blackpaw opened her icy blue eyes to see the green eyes of Pebblepaw.

"Really? I'm so tired." She stood up and stretched, blinking the sleep from her eyes. "Thanks for waking me up though." Then with a swish of her tail she left Pebblepaw alone in the apprentice den.

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"Blackpaw, are you okay?" Mouseear, Blackpaw's mentor, asked worriedly, licking the black apprentice behind the ears.

"Huh? Yeah, yeah, I'm fine..." Blackpaw yawned.

But she wasn't. She was beyond excited, and tired at the same time.

She had been having secret meetings with Stormpelt almost every night for two moons. All part of their master plan to get rid of Adderstar, and then eventually, Eagleshade.

But, Blackpaw realized, *it isn't just about the plan anymore. I feel like Stormpelt and I are destined to rule together. And be together.*

Blackpaw shook those thoughts out of her mind. *That can wait. Power first, love second.*

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"So, how are you doing?" Birdpaw asked.

"Good. I'm doing--good." Blackpaw wanted to tell her sister everything, but she remembered what Stormpelt told her.

Don't trust anyone, only me.

"You don't seem 'good'. You seem like you're hiding something...What is it?" Birdpaw pressed.

Blackpaw knew her sister wouldn't understand, but it still hurt her to lie to someone she was so close to. "I've just been tired lately. Got any herbs for that?"

Birdpaw laughed. "No, but some sleep wouldn't hurt, Blackpaw. You look exhausted." She rested her tail on Blackpaw's shoulder. "You can tell me if something is going on, you know that, right?"

Blackpaw nodded.

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"I, Adderstar, leader of Shadowclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn."

It's really happening.

"Blackpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to

protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

No

"I do."

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Blackpaw, from this moment you will be known as Blackfrost."

Perfect.

"Starclan honors your braveness, and cleverness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Shadowclan"

My clan

Adderstar rests his muzzle on Blackfrost's head, and Blackfrost licks his shoulder in turn.

Adderstar begins to give Nightpaw and Pebblepaw their warrior names, but Blackfrost doesn't hear him. All she can think about is killing the leader.

He's no good. I'm doing everyone a favor. Shadowclan will flourish under me and Stormpelt's leadership. I can't wait to kill him; I can already feel the blood in my claws. Warmer than prey, and more satisfying.

Blackfrost caught Stormpelt's eye and he nodded.

It's on.

Chapter 5

The night was quiet. Perfect. Except that Blackfrost was forced to sit vigil with Pebblestream and Nightwind. Her job was to distract them while Stormpelt got Adderstar to go outside the camp.

"Hey, guys." She whispered.

Pebblestream and Nightwind looked appalled that Blackfrost had broken the warrior code, but then their inner fun started to show.

"What?" Nightwind grins.

"Yeah, what?" Pebblestream whispers.

"Let's explore outside the camp!" She meows.

"Isn't that against the rules?" Pebblestream says doubtfully.

"Yeah! But it sounds fun!" Nightwind looked excited.

"Let's go then!" Blackfrost began to walk away, Nightwind following close behind, as always.

"Are you guys sure this is okay?" Pebblestream stayed behind for only a few heartbeats before she decided to go with the other new warriors.

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While the three cats were walking, Blackfrost randomly dashed forward, her tail trailing behind.

The other cats were caught off guard, but soon started to chase.

"Try to catch me!" Blackfrost yowled.

But just as she said that, she dashed up a tree and watched the two
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warriors pass by it, still running full speed. When they were out of earshot she jumped down and snuck away to a secret place.

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"So, Adderstar." Blackfrost snarled. "How does it feel to be betrayed and have the power ripped from you? I need to know."

Adderstar struggled under Stormpelt's paws, but he was just too weak for the younger cat. "Please, no! Don't do this! Stormpelt! Stop this! I thought you were a loyal warrior! You are! Please!"

Stormpelt laughed bitterly. "I'm loyal to myself, Adderstar. You should've thought twice about choosing Eagleshade as your deputy rather than me!"

"No! Please, no! I'm sorry, Stormpelt!" Adderstar was terrified, and Blackfrost loved it.

Blackfrost unsheathed her claws, flexing them in the moonlight. Adderstar cringed and whimpered.

"You're too weak to be a leader." Blackfrost takes her claws and slices Adderstar's belly open slowly, watching the scarlet liquid flow around her paw.

Adderstar yowled in pain, but they were too far from the camp for his cries to be heard.

Blackfrost picked up her paw and licked the blood from them. It tasted horrible, and salty, but it filled her with the sense of victory. Then she scratched the leader again, harder, and watched as he began to stop struggling.

Stormpelt and Blackfrost's eyes focused on Adderstar's green ones, and watched as his last life faded from them, along with the fear of being betrayed.

"We did it." Blackfrost whispered.

Both cats were too happy to express in words, so Blackfrost just buried her face in Stormpelt's fur and breathed in his familiar scent.
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"Blackfrost we found yo-"

Then Pebblestream yowled, her shrieks echoing through the silent night.

Chapter 6

Blackfrost's blood turned to ice. The world seemed to shift underneath her paws. This wasn't supposed to happen.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

This wasn't *supposed to happen.*

But it did.

She turned her head to Pebblestream and her gaze bored into the new warrior. For a while no one said anything, even Stormpelt was silent.

"What are you d-doing?" Pebblestream whispered. Her entire pelt rippled with horrible shivers of fear, which was very evident to the murderers in front of her. Pebblestream widened her green eyes as she wasn't answered with something to reassure her.

Blackfrost showed her gleaming white teeth in the half-moonlight. "Doesn't matter what we are doing. Because you're not going to tell anyone anyway." She snarled menacingly as the other cat flinched.

Stormpelt seemed to suddenly be aware of what Blackfrost intended to do. "Blackfrost..." He said doubtfully.

Blackfrost whirled around to face him. "What? Are you backing out now? Mouse-brain! There's no way around it!"

Stormpelt was silent for a heartbeat, his gaze focused on Blackfrost. Then he slowly nodded his approval.

Blackfrost leaped onto Pebblestream's back, and the tortoiseshell she-cat fell over, startled. Blackfrost went straight for her clanmate's neck, biting as hard as she could.

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A black warrior watched through some undergrowth as his fellow clanmate died under the claws of Blackfrost. He wanted to yowl, he wanted to attack the killer. But his undying loyalty to the black she-cat could not be overseen. The other cat, Stormpelt, stood watching approvingly. The watcher turned his green gaze up to Silverpelt, and the night wind rippled through his dark fur.

Starclan help us.
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Chapter 7

Birdpaw watched as Toadfoot paced across the medicine den, murmuring to himself, his eyes huge amber saucers.

"This can't be happening. Who could have killed her?"

Birdpaw shivered. Just before sunhigh, her sister had run into camp, screaming. The whole clan had woken up and followed the black she-cat to the scene of a horrible crime; the clan leader and a new warrior were murdered by a mystery cat. Blackfrost explained that she and Pebblestream watched the clan leader leave to go on a walk, and followed when he didn't return. The she-cats had split up to cover more ground, and by the time she heard Pebblestream's shriek, Blackfrost was too late.

A tabby tom suddenly pushed through the bramble entrance.

"Eagleshade! What's going on? Is Riverclan attacking? No, it must be rogues! Oh, Starclan help us!" Toadfoot shrunk to the ground whimpering, still murmuring nonsense about intruders.

"Birdpaw, may I speak with you, alone?" Eagleshade meowed, stealing a glance at the Shadowclan medicine cat writhing on the ground.

Birdpaw nodded and followed Eagleshade outside the camp under the shade of a tall pine.

"Sorry about Toadfoot; Pebblestream was his niece. He's also quite old now," Eagleshade wrapped his tail neatly around his huge paws. "I think it might be time for you to take his place as Shadowclan's medicine cat."

Birdpaw was taken aback by this sudden decision. "I'm not sure if I'm ready! What if some cat is sick an-"

"You'll be fine, Birdpaw. I've seen you working under pressure; calm even at the worst time. So," Eagleshade watched the young apprentice. "If it's okay with you, I'd like to have your ceremony as soon as possible."

Birdpaw could've leapt with joy and fainted with apprehension at the same time, but she just nodded, smiling despite the earlier events of that day.

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Blackfrost watched Nightwind closely. He seemed to be mourning just like the rest of the clan, but she couldn't trust him just yet. Wasn't he with Pebblestream when she was looking for her? Blackfrost leaned up against Stormpelt and suddenly felt dizzy.

What's wrong with you?

A little voice seemed to ask her.

Why are you killing your clanmates?

Blackfrost shivered, but not just because of the late leaf-fall air.

"Are you okay?" Stormpelt asked. He sounded worried, but Blackfrost had no idea what was going through the gray warrior's head.

"I think so." She answered doubtfully.

For a heartbeat, both cats just watched the rest of the clan; every cat had drooping tails and ears, sadness was so evident Blackfrost could almost smell it.

Stormpelt broke the silence. "I'm pretty trusted by Eagleshade...hopefully he chooses me as deputy."

When Blackfrost was an apprentice, she would've rolled her eyes at this statement. But now it was very important in the continuation of her plan.

"He will," Blackfrost purred. "He'd be stupid not to."
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Nightwind watched Blackfrost closely. She seemed to be mourning just like the rest of the clan, but he couldn't trust her just yet.

The black she-cat was growing closer to Stormpelt every day, and that just made Nightwind hate him more.

I will get him soon. Then I won't need to be jealous.
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Chapter 8

"Hey, congratulations on becoming medicine cat, finally!" Blackfrost praised her sister.

"Yes! I was so excited! Now we both have our full names!" Birdflight had become Shadowclan's official medicine cat the night before, and she couldn't be more proud.

"Finally!" Blackfrost meowed jokingly.

Even though Blackfrost was excited for her sister, nothing made her happier than the fact that Eaglestar had chosen Stormpelt as deputy.

Now you have to kill the leader again.

The voice was back again, and even though it was hers, Blackfrost hated it.

Your own father.

The voice nagged.

"*He was never there for us as a father."*

Blackfrost retaliated.

"...so then we will go together." Birdflight meowed happily.

"Yeah, yeah..." Blackfrost had no idea what Birdflight had said before, but she was too exhausted to ask.

"Are you alright?" Birdflight lowered her voice. "You can tell me if you're not."

Blackfrost shook her head, clearing her head of all the negative thoughts. "I'm fine."

"Good," Birdflight suddenly changed the subject. "So, what's going on between you and Stormpelt?" She smirked.

Blackfrost froze for a moment.

She's onto our plan! No way I'm killing my own sister!

But then she realized what her sister had actually meant, and her pelt turned hot with embarrassment. "Uh...nothing." She lied.

Birdflight wasn't convinced. "Okay...whatever you say." She winked and laughed.

"I'll see you later." Blackfrost turned away.

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Turns out that while Blackfrost was daydreaming, Birdflight was actually telling her that she was going to the gathering.

On the way there, Blackfrost couldn't stop shivering. She kept second-guessing herself.

What if I'm wrong? What if Eaglestar shouldn't die?

No. He has to. This will all be over soon.

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As Eaglestar jumped into the Great Oak, the other clans seemed confused. But when he told about Adderstar, all of Shadowclan held their breath.

Is he going to say that Adderstar was murdered?

Blackfrost's breath caught in her throat.

"Our former leader, Adderstar, has lost his last life to a horrible bout of Greencough, and Shadowclan mourns his loss."

He lied!

Blackfrost almost gasped.

Of course he did, mouse-brain! We can't let them know we're weak.

She realized.

But we won't be weak for long.

Chapter 9

When the clan arrived home from the gathering, Blackfrost was beyond exhausted. She started walking straight to the warriors den with Stormpelt, but a voice behind her stopped her in her tracks.

"Blackfrost. Can I talk to you?"

Eaglestar.

No, please don't.

"Of course you can." Blackfrost followed the clan leader outside the camp.

After a few heartbeats of silence, Eaglestar spoke. "I brought you out here to apologize. I know it's a little late, but I want you to know why I wasn't there for you as you were growing up."

No. Don't tell me that. I can't deal with the guilt if you do.

"Your mother was the love of my life, and I should've stayed with her. But I was too focused on becoming deputy, and then leader."

Like me.

"I just couldn't deal with a couple of kits if I was to be in charge. So I ditched you two, and I shouldn't have done that." Eaglestar's tail drooped and he dragged his big tabby paws ever so slightly. "And when your mother died...I couldn't stand to look at you both...you reminded me too much of her."

Was my mother a killer too? No, of course not. But you don't know that about me.

"I should've been with her. Then she never would've got bitten by that snake. But I was too selfish! Please don't become that way, Blackfrost. Please don't ever be too selfish to except other cat's

love." The clan leader sat down on some pine needles, and his amber eyes were downcast.

Blackfrost could see the pain in his eyes.

I can't do it.

She told the voice.

Yes you can. He's not your father. He's the clan leader and he's in the way. He's weak.

Blackfrost flexed her claws and struggled not to comfort Eaglestar.

Kill him.

She held back the tears.

Make him sorry.

Blackfrost didn't move.

Make him sorry for what? He's been nothing but good to me!

She asked the voice.

Kill him! Kill him now!

"No!" Blackfrost screamed out loud. "No, no, no, *no*!" She collapsed and covered her ears with her paws.

"What's wrong?" Eaglestar asked, the worry thick in his voice.

"I can't kill you!" She blurted.

The air seemed to grow still. All the night sounds stopped. The lake lapped up against the shore, hungry. Blackfrost froze in her crouched position.

"You don't have to."

Stormpelt.

No.

Don't do it.

Don't do it.

Do it.

Kill him.

Chapter 10

Eaglestar turned around and looked at Stormpelt with wide amber saucer eyes. "What's going on? Why did she say she couldn't kill me?" He asked, alarmed.

"Because. You're her dad, she couldn't possibly kill you then." Stormpelt answered, his blue eyes dark.

"Why would she have the choice?" Eaglestar grew suspicious, bracing himself for a fight.

"You're clan leader. You have to die if we will rule the clan." Stormpelt saw the hostility in Eaglestar.

Blackfrost rose to her feet. "I don't want to do this. Is there another way?" She meowed, her voice shaking with apprehension.

"What? Are you backing out now? Mouse-brain! There's no way around it!" Stormpelt echoed Blackfrost's words from before.

Eaglestar stepped in between them. "This is sick. Don't do this, Blackfrost. I can take care of him, but there's no way I could hurt you."

Stormpelt unsheathed his claws.

Blackfrost paused.

What are you waiting for? He just gave you the ticket to success. Kill him, he won't fight back.

But he's my dad.

No he's not. He's clan leader.

I won't kill him.

Then let Stormpelt kill him. Just give him the okay.

No! I don't want my dad to die!

Stop with the sympathy! He had none for you and your sister when your mother died!

I don't care! He apologized!

Kill him.

No!

Kill him!

No!

"Kill him." Blackfrost felt the forbidden words slide out of her mouth like blood from a deep wound.

Stormpelt leapt in the air, landing square on Eaglestar's back, knocking him off balance.

Eaglestar was still taken aback by what Blackfrost had commanded. "Blackfrost! No! Don't let him corrupt you! He's evil!" The leader shrieked.

Blackfrost just watched.

Eaglestar began to fight back, but it was too late.

Stormpelt grabbed the clan leader's neck in his teeth, biting down hard.

Eaglestar's blood poured out across the pine needles strewn across the ground.

"Blackfrost..." He choked out. "Please, remember what I said...I'm done for." He gasped. "Don't let him turn you evil...you still have time...please..."

Eaglestar's blood poured out of him, along with his nine lives. The wound was too deep to recover from.

Then he lay still, and Stormpelt took his paw off the leader's bloody chest.

"Are you okay?" He asked after a heartbeat.

"Yes." Then she looked up at Silverpelt.

Eaglestar, I'm so sorry. I hope you find peace in Starclan. And I hope that I meet you there someday, even after all this.

"I forgive you, Eaglestar."

Please forgive me.

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A/N: I had trouble killing Eaglestar off! Lol I almost went back and changed it, but I feel like this was necessary for what happens next! So I hope you guys like my story so far anyway. >_<
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Chapter 11

Blackfrost sat alone on a small ridge overlooking the lake. It was past moonhigh now, and the claw-slice in the sky was almost invisible. Gazing up at silverpelt, Blackfrost felt a tear slip down her cheek. But these tears were real, unlike the ones from before, when she convinced the clan that the same murderer from before must've killed Eaglestar.

I killed my own father! What next? Birdflight?

She sank to the ground and closed her eyes tight.

I wish Stormpelt was here. He would know just what to say.

"Blackfrost?"

Stormpelt?

She turned around, only to find out that the cat was actually Nightwind.

Of course! Stormpelt is at the Moonpool getting his nine lives from Starclan. I wonder if they're giving them to him? Do they know what he and I have done?

"What do you want?" Blackfrost hissed at the black tom.

He shrank back as if he was struck by unsheathed claws. "I-I was just wondering what was wrong? You seem a little depressed."

Blackfrost rolled her icy blue eyes. "Of course I'm depressed! My father was just killed by some cat! And I don't know who it was!" As she talked, her voice turned from annoyed to distressed. "I don't know what to do! We weren't even that close, but I'm taking his death worse than anyone esle!"

Because I killed him.

"I know. Even though you try to hide it, everyone can see right through you." Nightwind murmured, sitting closer to the grieving she-cat.

Blackfrost leaned against him, not remembering that she hated him so much.

For a while, the two cats sat and watched the lake lap up against the pebbly shore, over and over. It was calming and ominous at the same time.

"I don't think Stormpelt should be leader. After all this, he's not ready." Nightwind whispered.

Blackfrost lifted her head, anger filling her entire body, blinding the sadness and pushing it down farther. "*What* did you just say?" She growled. "Stormpelt has worked his *paws* off training to be deputy and leader! And you don't think he's *ready*?"

She lifted her paw, claws unsheathed, and scratched the warrior across his face, narrowly missing his eyes. "Take that as a warning, *flea-pelt!"* Blackfrost spat.

Nightwind flinched and watched as the only she-cat he ever cared about stalked away from him, farther than ever.

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"Blackfrost!" A voice whispered as a paw shook her. "Blackfrost, wake up! I need to tell you something."

Blackfrost lifted her eyelids to see the cat was Stormpelt. He stood above her in the warriors den. "I'm--coming." She grunted, pulling her weary body up. Something wasn't right, but she didn't mention it to Stormpelt.

The two cats left camp, under close watch of Thorntail, who was guarding the camp entrance in case of an intruder attack.

They both headed straight for the lake overlook, not pausing to talk on the way.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Okay...so, I have some sort of bad news." Stormpelt meowed.

"Oh no!" Blackfrost gasped. "Did starclan not give you your nine lives?"

"Well...no." Stormpelt answered, "But I did get them."

"Really? How?" Blackfrost was astonished at the fact that she was right about Starclan's reluctance to help someone evil.

No, not evil. We are doing this for the sake of our clan.

"The Dark forest cats." Stormpelt's voice was low, as if he was scared of being overheard.

"What? Stormpelt! Your not evil!"

"No, I'm not. But, Blackfrost! They actually understood why we're doing this! And no one else ever has understood me--or you--like that before!" Stormpelt was smiling now.

Blackfrost suddenly realized something. "Stormpelt! What if the reason Tigerstar and Brokenstar and Hawkfrost and all those others did those things was actually to *help* the clans?"

"Yes! That must be it! Blackfrost, you're a genius!" Stormpelt laughed. "And its 'Stormstar' now!"

"Of course, *Stormstar!"* Blackfrost laughed.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Nightwind watched the two cats from behind a pine once again. He knew all of their plans. Blackfrost killed Adderstar and Pebblestream. And Stormstar killed Eaglestar.

The black warrior was torn between telling the clan, and keeping his loyalty to Blackfrost.

I won't tell. For now.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Chapter 12

"So now that you and Stormstar are officially mates, are you gonna have any kits?" Birdflight asked, sorting some herbs with her gray tabby paw.

"I don't think so..." Blackfrost meowed awkwardly. "At least not yet. I need to take care of the clan, I don't have time for kits!"

Birdflight laughed. "Of course you would say that!" She joked. "You've always been the incredibly loyal one. You'll make a great leader one day."

Blackfrost puffed out her chest with pride. "You think so?" She meowed.

"Yeah! Why else would Stormstar have made you his deputy? Besides the fact that you're his mate, anyway." Birdflight licked a paw and rubbed it across her cheek.

"I guess you're right!" Blackfrost laughed. "Maybe it-"

"Blackfrost? Can I talk to you?" Stormstar called from the medicine entrance.

"I'll talk to you later, I promise!" Blackfrost dashed out of the medicine den, almost running over Silverkit, Rainfall and Thorntail's new addition to the clan.

Blackfrost laughed. "Watch out, little one! Wouldn't want any warriors squashing you!" She told the little kit.

"Okay! I'll go back to the nursery!" Silverkit dashed away.

Blackfrost watched and started to wish she had kits of her own.

No, there's plenty of time for that later, after everyone forgets about the 'mystery murderer' I've been telling them about.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"So...what did you wanna talk about?" Blackfrost sat with her tail curled neatly around her paws, at the lake overlook.

"Well...I had a dream last night." Stormstar meowed.

Blackfrost laughed. "All cats have dreams, Stormstar, not just leaders."

Stormstar cuffed her over the ear, claws sheathed. "That's not what I meant, mouse-brain!" He laughed. "I *meant* I had a dream about something important. A *prophecy*."

Blackfrost's eyes widened. "A *prophecy*? From Starclan? Or the Dark forest?" She asked, anticipation bubbling up to her ears.

"The Dark forest. But we agreed that they were good, remember?"

Blackfrost nodded.

"Okay, well the dream went like this..."

Stormstar woke up in a dark clearing. This isn't Shadowclan territory*, he realized,* where am I? *He looked around frantically, wondering who had brought him there and why.*

"Calm down, Stormstar, you are safe here."

Stormstar turned around to see a dark brown tabby tom pad out from the darkness of the trees.

"Who are you?" He asked, backing away from the strange cat.

The cat laughed. "Don't worry, Im not here to hurt you." He meowed in a deep voice. "My name is Tigerstar, but I'm sure you've heard all kinds of stories about me."

"Tigerstar? Am I in Starclan?" Stormstar asked, looking around wearily.

"No, far from it, actually." Tigerstar told the gray tom. "But I brought you here to give you a very important message. A prophecy, if you will."
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Really?" Stormstar asked excitedly. "What is it?"

Tigerstar stepped forward ominously, and as he did, many cats stepped from the shadows, but Stormstar couldn't see their faces.

"Sometimes it's hard to tell who's really with you, until it's all over. Be careful Stormstar, someone you know is only pretending to be loyal to you. Find them and kill them before it's too late."

Stormstar's eyes grew wide. "Who? Who is it?" But the big tom was already fading away.

"I can't tell you now. But know that we will meet again, this isn't the last time I walk in your dreams."

Then the forest was nonexistent, and so were any of Stormstar's ideas of who the prophecy was talking about.

Chapter 13

It had been a while since Stormstar's dream about Tigerstar. Blackfrost didn't know what else to say to him about it, so she kept her mouth shut.

"I'm going to the gathering today!" Mousepaw, a newer apprentice, bragged to his sister, Heatherpaw.

"How come you get to go and I don't?" Heatherpaw whined.

Blackfrost padded up to the two apprentices. "Because you refused to help Mousepaw check the elders for ticks, Heatherpaw."

Heatherpaw's mouth hung open. "What? Is that *it?* I can't believe this! Surely I'm not the first one to refuse that nasty job!"

"No," Blackfrost gritted her teeth, "but you sure are the only one to argue with the clan deputy about it."

Heatherpaw's green eyes narrowed. "Whatever." Then she turned tail and padded to the fresh-kill pile.

Mousepaw looked up at Blackfrost. "Please don't kick my sister out of the clan! I promise I'll make her do better! She just needs to listen!" The small tabby apprentice's eyes were wide with concern.

"Kick her out? When have you ever heard of Shadowclan kicking some cat out?" Blackfrost asked.

"Well-well...the elders told me! They said if we weren't good, that you would send us out to fend for ourselves!" Mousepaw shuddered.

Blackfrost stifled a *mrrrow* of laughter. "Yes, well...they were right! We will not have this foolishness in Shadowclan, you need to keep up the good work...or else." She lowered her voice evilly and Mousepaw nodded and darted off.

"That poor apprentice didn't know what hit him!" Birdflight padded up to her sister.

"Well if that's what it takes." Blackfrost licked a paw and drew it over her face. "Maybe he'll tell Heatherpaw all about it and she'll come to her senses."

Birdflight laughed. "She's just an apprentice, Blackfrost. We were apprentices before, remember?"

"I don't remember being that annoying." Blackfrost sighed.

"Well, all I'm saying is maybe you shouldn't be so hard on the little scrap. After all, they are the future of the clan." Birdflight rested her tail on Blackfrost's shoulder, then padded away to the medicine den.

Maybe she's right. But then again, what does she know?

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At the gathering, Blackfoot was very nervous. How was Stormstar going to explain another sudden change in Shadowclan's leader?

After the other clan leaders were done speaking, Stormstar stood up. "Fellow clans, I'm sure you've all noticed that Eaglestar isn't here today...well that's because we recently had a deadly encounter with a huge badger."

A lot of cats from other clans gasped and murmured astonishment; including Shadowclan.

I hope they don't say anything about the mystery murderer.

But to Blackfrost's relief, the gathering went by perfectly, and every Shadowclan cat stayed quiet about the murderer.

About me.

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"Blackfrost! Wake up!" Stormstar's deep voice pulled her from her dreams.

"Wha-" She sat up, blinking sleep from her eyes.

"Hey, sorry to wake you, but Gorsetail was on night watch last night, and he said he heard some strange rustling coming from just outside the camp. It might be nothing, but I want you to lead a border patrol to see what's up. I would do it but I already promised Robinpaw and Ravenpaw that they would be warriors first thing this morning." Stormstar paused and sighed deeply, looking around the leader's den that both cats shared.

"It's alright, Stormstar. Every leader has these things happen, not just you. Your a wonderful leader for Shadowclan." Blackfrost purred, licking the gray tom on the cheek.

"You're right." He agreed, perking up already. "Better go pick out your patrol."

Blackfrost padded out into the early morning darkness. She realized that some cats were already awake, and began choosing from them.

"Alright everyone! I'm leading a border patrol because strange sounds have been reported." She began.

Thorntail snorted, "Probably just a bird. Honestly! What's wrong with cats these days? It's not even sunhigh!"

Blackfrost glared at the tabby warrior. "You're right, Thorntail! This isn't a good job for you so early in the morning! So I'd suggest you'd better go check the elders for ticks and when you learn some respect, I'll treat you like a warrior again."

Some cats snickered, and, with an astonished look, Thorntail stalked off to the elders den, thrashing his tabby tail.

"Anyhow, I think I'd like to have Mouseear, Nightwind, Firepelt, and Grayfoot." Blackfrost flicked her tail to signal for them to follow.

As the cats were padding to the thorn barrier, a voice came from behind them.

"Hey! Can I come with you? Please!" Heatherpaw padded up to the

patrol, black tail held high.

"No! After the way you treated me earlier? Why don't you go help Thorntail check the elders for ticks?" Blackfrost growled.

Heatherpaw's tail drooped and her eyes were downcast. "Oh. Okay then..." Then she began to pad away, sulkily dragging her paws.

Blackfrost rolled her icy blue eyes. It was obvious to her that Heatherpaw was faking to get attention.

Mouseear narrowed her eyes at the deputy. "Oh, come on, Blackfrost. Honestly, if you're going to be the clan's deputy, you need to grow up!" The older warrior growled.

Blackfrost whirled around on the gray tabby she-cat. "What did you just say to me? I am the deputy. Not you. Maybe you need to shut your jaws before I shut them for you!" She snarled, unaware she was unsheathing her claws.

Mouseear rolled her eyes but said no more.

"Heatherpaw. Yes, you can come with us." Blackfrost muttered.

The apprentice immediately perked up. "Really?" Then she bounded after the patrol into the woods.

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The pines were void of much prey in the cold leaf-bare season. Blackfrost could see her breath puffing out in front of her as she walked.

Gorsetail had told her the noises were coming from close to the Windclan border, but he hadn't been able to come on the patrol.

Honestly, Gorsetail! This is the worst time for a bellyache.

"I think I hear something up ahead." Redstripe whispered.

Blackfrost led her patrol closer to where the sounds were coming from. *Are those noises coming toward us?* She strained to hear and
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realized a group of at least three cats was approaching.

"Get ready for anything." She told the Shadowclan cats.

A large tan colored tom stepped out into the open from the darkness. Behind him followed two more cats; a ginger she-cat and a gray tabby tom. None of the cats looked hostile, but Blackfrost wouldn't take any chances.

"What are you Windclan cats doing on Shadowclan territory?" She questioned, struggling not to claw their ears off right then and there.

"We've come to speak to Stormstar." The tan tom meowed deeply.

Blackfrost narrowed her eyes but nodded and led the Windclan cats back to her camp. "Don't try anything." She growled.

When the patrol arrived with three extra members, a lot of attention was attracted. Despite the looks of hostility from the Shadowclan cats, the Windclan patrol kept their heads held high.

"What's going on?" Stormstar asked Blackfrost.

"Well, these cats say they want to talk to you." Blackfrost flicked her tail to indicate their visitors.

The tan tom stepped forward. "Actually, just me. Crowstar sent me in place of his deputy, who couldn't make it here today." He explained.

This just keeps getting more and more odd.

"Alright then." Stormstar nodded "Come with me, and if you don't mind, I'd like my deputy to be there as well." He glanced at Blackfrost.

"That's okay with me. I just need to get this message to you." The tom meowed.

"Follow me then." Stormstar led the way to his den, which was basically made of two rocks piled together for the entrance, then a

roomy interior of mostly one big rock.

All three cats sat down, wrapping their tails around their paws to keep them warm.

"Well I should tell you that my name is Wildbreeze." The tom meowed. "But nonetheless, I was told to tell you that our medicine cat has received an omen about you, Stormstar."

Stormstar's blue eyes widened. "Me? Why would *your* medicine cat dream of me?"

"We don't know at this point. But we do know that it's serious. The omen--it was not good." Wildbreeze sighed, as if giving the news was almost too much for him "The dream our medicine cat, Featherdrop, had of you, was told to me like this...

I woke up in a huge clearing. It was almost pitch black, but I was able to make out the eyes of two or three cats. One cat had distinctive, icy blue eyes. While another had a pair of darker blues. The third cat had bright green eyes that seemed to look sad the entire time.

Suddenly, one cat stepped into the open, and I recognized it as Shadowclan's new leader, Stormstar; the cat with dark blue eyes.

"Stormstar! What is going on? Where am I?" I stuttered.

"Run, Featherdrop, run before they catch you." Stormstar whispered. I could just make out big scratches covering his sides and neck. They weren't bleeding, but they looked painful.

"Are you okay? Who am I running from?" I asked. But he was already running away.

The cat with green eyes stepped forward next, revealing a Shadowclan cat I thought was named Nightwind.

"Featherdrop...No one can defeat them...the clans are over..." A tear slid down the warrior's cheek and he ran in the opposite direction that Stormstar had ran.

The only pair of eyes left were the icy blue ones. I felt vulnerable, and

cold. The eyes seemed to see straight to my soul, lingering on my deepest secrets and weaknesses.

The cat stepped forward, revealing Blackfrost, the Shadowclan deputy.

"Can you tell me what's going on?" I asked her. But she didn't answer. She just stared with those eyes of hers. Her black pelt blended into the night like camouflage.

"There will never be peace until a single ruler prevails above all. Good or Bad, Starclan nor the dark forest can make these decisions. Run before things get bad or your clan will be the first to fall."

Then she too, ran. But not from something. Toward something. Something wasn't right about the black she-cat. All I knew was that something was coming.

And it definitely wasn't good.

The clans were in serious danger.

Chapter 14

Blackfrost and Stormstar sat in stunned silence. What could this strange omen possibly mean? And why had it been sent to a Windclan medicine cat rather than Birdflight?

"So...what does it mean?" Stormstar asked, breaking the silence.

Wildbreeze gazed into the clan leader's eyes. "I have no idea, Stormstar. But you better get your clan ready for anything; we have no idea what might be on its way to us right now."

Blackfrost felt a cold breeze ripple her fur and shivered. What could this omen possibly mean? Was something awful going to happen to Windclan and Shadowclan?

"Well, thank you for bringing this message to us. I'll be sure to tell my medicine cat and we'll try and work out what this is about." Stormstar nodded to the Windclan warrior with respect.

"Yes, that's a wonderful idea. And I'll be sure to let Shadowclan know if we should find anything else out about this." Wildbreeze promised.

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Blackfrost blinked the sleep from her eyes. It was a cold leaf-bare morning, and she was leading a hunting patrol. The pines were covered in layers of icy frost that twinkled in the early sunlight.

For a moment, she felt as though everything were perfect, and not a paw was out of place. But then, she remembered the horrible warning from Windclan, and sank back down into worry's sharp claws.

What if Shadowclan is not prepared for what's coming? What if this is a lie from Windclan so that they can invade us?
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The questions were endless, but Blackfrost could answer none. She shook her head to clear her thoughts.

This is a hunting patrol, not a clan meeting. my thoughts can wait.

She signaled with her tail for the patrol to split up and look for prey scattered about.

Almost at once, Blackfrost caught sight of something moving in a clump of reeds. She had chosen the wettest part of their marsh territory, in hopes of finding a lizard or two.

To her surprise, it wasn't a lizard; it was a frog.

Yuck! Well, prey is prey. I'll just have to deal with it.

Blackfrost distinctly remembered that an elder, Mapletail, happened to favor the taste of frogs.

She crouched low, making sure the wind was blowing in her favor, so she could smell the frog and know exactly where it was. Then, she pounced, landing directly on top of the slimy creature.

After delivering the kill blow, she padded back to her patrol to see what they'd caught.

Rainfall had caught a thrush, and even though it was scrawny, Blackfrost was glad the silver she-cat was able to return to warrior duties without a problem after being in the nursery for so long.

Gorsetail and Firepelt hadn't caught anything.

Well, I can't really blame them. It is leaf-bare after all.

Blackfrost congratulated them for trying anyway, and the patrol headed back to camp.

When they arrived, Birdflight and Stormstar were going into the leader's den, deep in conversation.

They must be talking about the Windclan omen.

As Blackfrost padded over to the elder's den to deliver her frog, Silverpaw bounded up to her, her eyes wide with concern.

"Blackfrost! Heatherpaw is in the medicine den doing something and I'm not really sure why she would be in there..." The young apprentice was obviously very worried.

"Alright, I'll go check it out." Blackfrost padded into the medicine den, keeping her paw steps light in case Heatherpaw was doing something bad.

As she watched, the black apprentice was reaching into the herb store and pulling out strange-looking berries.

What are they? Oh, how I wish Birdflight wasn't all the way in the leader's den!

Heatherpaw wrapped the berries up in a big leaf and began to walk out of the den, only to be stopped in her tracks by Blackfrost.

"And what do you think you're doing?" Blackfrost narrowed her eyes at the troublesome apprentice.

Heatherpaw's green eyes grew wide, then she calmed down. "Oh, Blackfrost! It's only you! I thought you were some crazy cat coming to attack me!" She laughed, the bundle of berries sitting at her paws.

"Did you not hear me? What are you doing with those berries?" Blackfrost glared at her.

"These?" Heatherpaw laughed again. "Birdflight asked me to give these to Brownpaw because he was complaining of a stomachache." The she-cat paused for a moment. When Blackfrost was silent, she added, "she's busy right now. If you were wondering why she would ask me to do that."

"Yes, I understand." Growled Blackfrost, a little disappointed that she wasn't getting the pesky she-cat in trouble for this. "Go ahead."

Heatherpaw padded out of the den, holding the leaf bundle in her jaws.

Birdflight walked into the den soon after Heatherpaw had left. "Hey, what was Heatherpaw doing in here? Was she hurt?"

Blackfrost laughed. "No, of course not! She was getting the berries you asked her to give to Brownpaw."

Birdflight's eyes narrowed. "I didn't tell her anything like that. I haven't even spoken to her today."

Blackfrost's heart sped up as she realized that Heatherpaw must have lied for some reason.

But why?

"Show me the berries she took!" Birdflight hastily added.

Blackfrost reached her paw into the herb store and pulled out the strange berries from before.

Then Birdflight gasped. "Deathberries! Blackfrost, go find Brownpaw and bring him to me right away!"

Blackfrost dashed off. She knew what Deathberries were! The clan had decided to keep them in camp after her mother got bitten by the snake that killed her.

Oh no! What have I just let Heatherpaw get away with? Murder?

Finally, she found Heatherpaw's trail into the forest and spotted the two apprentices in a small clearing; Brownpaw was laying ominously still.

"Heatherpaw! What have you done?" She yowled at the black she-cat.

"Nothing." Heatherpaw shrugged her shoulders. "I found him like this."

Blackfrost struggled not to slit the cocky apprentice's throat, and grabbed Brownpaw by the scruff and dragged him to camp. He was Silverpaw's brother, and was recently made a warrior so he was still quite light.

The young apprentice was having trouble breathing, and it was getting progressively worse.

Finally, they arrived in the medicine den and Blackfrost laid him down on the ground.

Birdflight rushed up with some herbs in her jaws, that she immediately forced into Brownpaw's jaws.

"Come on, Brownpaw! Chew them and swallow them!" She told the brown tom.

He finally swallowed after what seemed like moons of waiting, and then immediately started to gag.

"Is that supposed to happen?" Blackfrost asked worriedly.

"Yes. I gave him yarrow to make him get sick to get rid of the berries." Her sister replied, not removing her eyes from the small cat's body.

Suddenly, Brownpaw got sick and Blackfrost could spot some berries in his vomit.

"Do you remember how many Heatherpaw stole?" Birdflight asked urgently.

Blackfrost thought for a moment, then remembered. "I think about four..." she replied.

Birdflight counted the berries that Brownpaw had thrown up. "Yes, four. That's it! He'll be fine."

Blackfrost felt a huge weight being lifted from her shoulders.

Now to deal with Heatherpaw.

Chapter 15

Blackfrost padded away from Brownpaw, who was now starting to recover from the berries already.

I have to find Heatherpaw.

She dashed out to the forest where she had last seen the black-furred she-cat. "Heatherpaw!" She yowled. "Where are you?" A small laugh was heard from behind her, and Blackfrost turned around to see Heatherpaw herself.

"You should have seen your face! You were so worried about that useless cat!" Heatherpaw growled, smiling despite what she had done.

"Heatherpaw! Why did you give Brownpaw deathberries? You knew what they were, and you must have wanted him to die. But why?" Blackfrost narrowed her eyes at the apprentice, not knowing what to expect.

Heatherpaw laughed mockingly. "Oh, Blackfrost..." She sneered. "I tried to kill him for the same reason that you killed Adderstar. And Pebblestream. And Eaglestar." The she-cat defiantly flicked her tail, before growling two words that sent shivers down Blackfrost's spine; "*For Power*."

"H-how did you find out about that?" Blackfrost struggled to keep her voice steady, but failed.

Heatherpaw circled the deputy like a hawk about to swoop in on it's prey. "A nice cat named *Hawkfrost* told me." She stopped circling to focus on Blackfrost's wide blue eyes. "He is from the Dark Forest, and he has a plan for me. A plan for power!"

Blackfrost felt a horrible feeling well up in her chest. And struggled to keep still.

"What? *Scared* of me? Hawkfrost said you would be. After all, he did teach me everything I know." Heatherpaw sat down and wrapped her tail neatly around her paws.

Blackfrost gritted her teeth. "But you're only an apprentice." She choked out.

"You were only an apprentice too, Blackfrost." Heatherpaw rolled her eyes. "Whatever. I'm done here. My mission is to kill Stormstar anyway, not you. Yet."

As Heatherpaw began to pad away, Blackfrost unleashed what she'd been holding in; attacking the smaller she-cat with full force.

Heatherpaw rolled over and battered at her belly, but the apprentice was no match for a full-grown warrior; even with training from the Dark Forest. Blackfrost leaned in and bit open the she-cat's throat, knowing it was finally over.

She sighed and padded away to wash herself in a stream.

This is becoming all too common.

"W-why did you attack H-Heatherpaw?" A small voice muttered from behind her.

With wide eyes, Blackfrost turned around and saw Brownpaw, wide eyed and fluffed up to twice his size, cowering on the forest floor.

"Brownpaw," she said gently, "don't worry. It was for the best, I promise." Blackfrost's voice was steady and she watched the young apprentice as he didn't relax.

"You...you killed her!" He meowed, fear scent wafting off of him.

"Yes, I did. But she tried to kill you. Didn't you want justice?" She asked, struggling to stay as calm as she sounded.

"N-not like that...She didn't mean to give me deathberries. It was an accident!" Brownpaw backed away slowly, not taking his eyes off the deputy.

Blackfrost narrowed her eyes. "Brownpaw, please trust me. It was for the best."

Brownpaw shook his head. "I-I can never trust you again, Blackfrost! I will never be a part of a clan that you lead!" He dashed away through the forest, without another word, towards the Thunderclan border.

Blackfrost sat down, running through everything a thousand times in her head.

Was I wrong to kill Heatherpaw? She was evil, right? Where will Brownpaw go? Thunderclan? Will he tell them what I've done?

Too many questions were waiting to be answered, and Blackfrost had no time for them.

Maybe if I just sit here, Starclan will have mercy on me.

Chapter 16

Blackfrost sluggishly padded out of the warrior's den. Lately, she'd been feeling very drained.

"Hey, Blackfrost," Thorntail called from across the camp, "can I take out a hunting patrol?"

Blackfrost nodded, too tired to tell him that there already was a hunting patrol out at that moment. As she scanned the camp, she spotted her sister beckoning for her to come to the medicine den.

"Hey, Blackfrost." Birdflight said gently. "What's going on? Are you still upset about Heatherpaw?"

Blackfrost sighed and sat down. "Yes. And Brownpaw." She muttered, looking everywhere but her sister's eyes.

Birdflight rested her tail on her sister's shoulder. "It'll be okay, Blackfrost." Her eyes became sad. "It's not your fault that Brownpaw and Heatherpaw ran away."

Blackfrost nodded, hating that she had to lie to everyone in the clan about what really happened.

"Just try and take it easy, okay?" Birdflight meowed.

Blackfrost nodded again and padded away, dragging her paws in the pine needles strewn across the ground. Thoughts were running through her mind like a rabbit on overdrive. Heatherpaw, Brownpaw, the clan. What was happening to her?

"Blackfrost!" Stormstar padded over to her, his eyes soft with concern. "Are you okay? Are you still upset about what happened with-"

"No!" Blackfrost snapped. Stormstar stepped back in surprise. "Are...you sure?" He murmured. Blackfrost sat down, suddenly

feeling dizzy. "Sorry..." She closed her eyes, but all she could see was Heatherpaw's greedy face...and Brownpaw's terrified one.

"Blackfrost?" Stormstar's voice faded into the distance and Blackfrost was vaguely aware of her head coming in contact with the ground, then everything was black.

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Bright sunhigh light fell onto Blackfrost's fur, and as she opened her eyes she had to squint to see Birdflight, who was sorting through herbs.

"Blackfrost!" Birdflight seemed to notice that her sister was awake. "Oh, thank goodness you woke up! I thought you hit your head a bit too hard." She laughed, but then frowned when she saw that Blackfrost wasn't amused. "What's wrong?" She asked.

Blackfrost narrowed her eyes, suddenly very frustrated with the medicine cat. "I should be asking *you* that question. What's wrong with *me*?" She watched as Birdflight's eyes dashed around the den. Blackfrost suddenly got the impression that whatever was wrong with her was horrible, and her sister was hiding it. "It's bad, isn't it?" She was almost too scared to wonder what it was. "I'm going to die, aren't I?" She was practically panicking now. "This is why I've been so tired and drained; Starclan is ready for me! No, no, no!"

She stopped as Birdflight suddenly laughed. "Blackfrost, no. You've got it all wrong." She laughed again. "You're not going to die, far from it actually."

"Well...what is it then?" Blackfrost still refused to calm down, her heart beating fast.

"You're going to have kits!" Birdflight announced, tail curling with amusement.

"W-what? I am?" Blackfrost didn't know what to think. After all the horrible things that have happened...kits? "This is great! I'm going to be a mother!" She was surprised at her own enthusiasm, but she was happy nonetheless.
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Everything will change now.

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About three moons later, Blackfrost watched as her tiny kits played with a ball of moss.

Dewkit, a gray tom with green eyes, tackled his brother, Redkit, who had dark brown fur and a strange reddish stripe that started on his forehead and ended at the tip of his tail. Lilykit, their sister, who had black fur like her mother, stood by watching the toms. She was smaller, and very shy.

"Redkit, you're the fox!" Dewkit announced. "And Lilykit is the defenseless kit that the brave warrior-that's me-is going to save!"

"Why do I always have to be the fox?" Redkit whined.

"Because you look like one with that red tail!" Dewkit echoed the older warrior's words; he'd never seen a fox to say so for himself.

Redkit rolled his eyes. "Whatever you say, Dewkit!" He crouched down, about to pounce on his brother, when Stormstar padded up to them.

"You know, foxes would never crouch like *that*." He told Redkit. "It's more like this." He crouched in a clumsy way, then playfully pounced on Dewkit, careful not to step on him.

All the kits giggled and tackled each other, even Lilykit joined in.

Stormstar sat down next to Blackfrost, licking her ear. "Those kits are something, aren't they?" He meowed, watching the kits tussle and play.

Blackfrost laughed. "They're *perfect*. I know they'll go far one day." She leaned on Stormstar's shoulder.

"Of course they will. They've got the clan leader as a father and the deputy as a mother!" They both laughed.

"Ouch! You're biting too hard, Dewkit!" Redkit pushed his brother
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away with one paw and tackled Lilykit while Dewkit was distracted. "Yum, yum! This kit is delicious!" He pretended to eat Lilykit as she giggled. "Good for my fox tummy!"

"Not today, fox!" Dewkit puffed out his chest. "I'm a brave warrior, and I command you to let that kit go!" He attacked Redkit and they rolled around, seeming to never grow tired of their game.

Lilykit padded over to her parents and curled up at their feet, falling asleep almost instantly. She usually got tired faster than her brothers; and it didn't help that they all usually woke up before dawn. Blackfrost bent down and gave the tiny black kit a lick.

"Woah, little kit!" Gorsetail chuckled as Redkit tumbled under his paws. Then he walked over to Blackfrost. "You've got a pawful with those two! You're lucky this one's not as crazy!" He looked at Lilykit with soft eyes. "Do you think I could take a border patrol over to the Thunderclan border?" He asked.

"Of course, Gorsetail." Blackfrost always let him take those patrols to the Thunderclan border nowadays because he was Brownpaw's father, and he thought he might catch sight of him that way.

"Thanks, Blackfrost." He blinked his eyes with respect.

"I'm sure Brownpaw will come back soon." She told him, sympathy in her eyes.

"We can only hope so." Gorsetail looked down at his paws, and Blackfrost wondered if he blamed her for his only kit disappearing. After all, Brownpaw was the only kin he had left, after his mate, Yellowbird, died from greencough only a few moons before Brownpaw left Shadowclan.

"Don't blame yourself." Stormstar murmured to Blackfrost as Gorsetail padded away. "You did what you had to do. It's all behind us now. *All* of it."

"I hope you're right." Blackfrost watched her kits play, once more wondering how Gorsetail could possibly go on without his kit.

It's all my fault, isn't it, Starclan?